

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, January 23, 2003, 7:45 a.m., Room 206, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS AND OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Members: Jeff Searcy, Thomas Laging (departed at 8:21 a.m.), V.J. Nelson, Pat O'Donnell, and Kim Todd

Others: Lynn Johnson (Parks & Recreation), Scott Sullivan (Antelope Valley Design Team), Ed Zimmer, Marvin Krout and Michele Abendroth (Planning Dept.)

STATED PURPOSE OF THE MEETING: Regular Meeting of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission

Mr. Searcy called the meeting to order at 7:49 a.m. He stated that the group would proceed with agenda item number 2 for discussion until a quorum arrived to take action on agenda item number 1.

Design Concepts for J Street Bridge (Antelope Creek at 24th Street)

Mr. Searcy introduced Scott Sullivan, who is a member of the Antelope Valley Design Team, to discuss the J Street Bridge. Mr. Sullivan stated that the J Street bridge would probably be the last bridge of the group to be built, so timing is not as critical. Early on in Antelope Valley, the discussion was that all these bridges should have some continual elements to them and that there is an obvious relationship of one to the other as opposed to each bridge having a different identity. Through that process, they came up with several designs of bridges. At one point through the process, the materials of the bridges changed significantly from concrete and stone to brick. The current designs came out as brick concepts, as the brick was thought to be a tie-in to campus buildings and thought of as a Nebraska material. When these bridges came to the Urban Design Committee, the group felt strongly that brick was an inappropriate material for bridges. There was also discussion about the false nature of the cables and about what makes these bridges symbolic of Nebraska or Lincoln. In response to that, the Urban Design Committee asked that the process be re-visited.

Most recently, there was a meeting two days ago of a smaller committee of people representing city agencies, UNL, and the Lower Platte South NRD, which was thought to be more conducive to a successful design process. Mr. Sullivan continued by stating that we are on a short timeline to keep the north bridges going. One of the things that came out of the meeting two days ago was that the J Street bridge does not necessarily have to be as similar to the other bridges as originally thought because of its distance from the other bridges. There was also discussion about a tie-in to the capitol. Some people had concerns if that means that we are trying to replicate the capitol. He noted that he does not feel that is the case. There was also discussion regarding having that sub-committee reach a consensus of the bridge design goals, and asked Mr. Zimmer to elaborate further.

Mr. Zimmer stated that he brought in the design objectives from the Urban Design Committee, but did not receive consensus on that. There is a strong feeling that a contemporary statement is important. He stated that he envisioned a more classically or traditionally rendered designed bridge. He stated that in his role, he wants to help the "client committee" eventually speak as a unified body. He suggested that the group

take the concepts that have been presented to date, revisit the materials and some of the added false structural decoration and return with a cleaner, stronger concept that the designer is more comfortable with. He noted that does not answer the question of today, and stated that the J Street bridge will be under the group's review today. He continued by reiterating the fact that one of the big design concepts is how much should it be unique or similar to the other bridges.

Mr. Laging posed the question as to whether JAVA has had any discussion with Lincoln Public Schools in regard to the parking lots. Mr. Sullivan responded that he has not heard of any coordination with Lincoln High.

Mr. Laging questioned if there are any engineering considerations in this design. Mr. Sullivan stated that structurally speaking, they are flat slabs with pre-stressed concrete slabs. Because of the water way below, the notion of the picturesque arched bridge is not a possibility, because they need that full cross-section underneath the bridge to move flood water. In regard to the aesthetics of the bridge, you are limited to the piers. Mr. Johnson noted that the J Street bridge is the only bridge that will not have a pedestrian walkway underneath; instead, there will be a walkway on the bridge.

Mr. Johnson stated that one of the questions that we need to ask is whether this bridge is part of the Antelope Valley Bridge family. He argued that it should be because he feels that we need to create that Antelope Valley identity that far down.

Mr. Laging suggested that, in terms of Capitol Environs, we need to have a standard in place to implement and stated that he would advocate something more modest and understated. He then posed a question regarding if the J Street bridge should be an extension of the family of bridges. Mr. Johnson responded by stating that he did not feel the bridges needed to be identical. The original thoughts about the bridges were that the O Street bridge would be the predominant bridge, and the others would not be identical, but come from the same family and would be lesser bridges in terms of ornamentation and overall presence.

Mr. Zimmer agreed that it should be in the same family, perhaps as a 'cousin'. He stated that he had a notion that maybe the capitol should inspire all the bridges. Mr. Johnson stated that the challenge has been how to make these bridges 'Lincoln', and, in his opinion, that has not been found yet. He also noted that there has been a very conscious decision not to replicate the Haymarket, so we jumped from not being historic to being contemporary, but he felt there should be something in the middle.

Mr. Sullivan mentioned that there were some neighbors who brought up the notion that they be given the opportunity to identify issues pertinent to that particular location. He questioned if the Commission felt that was appropriate for the J Street bridge.

Mr. Searcy questioned if there are any communities who have done a series of bridges. Mr. Sullivan stated that there is a similar situation in Kansas City. Each bridge was designed by a different firm, and they all have a traditional reference about them.

Mr. Searcy then asked if there is something that the Commission can do to help. Mr. Johnson stated that their guidance that this bridge should be a cousin has provided direction. Mr. Sullivan agreed that is an objective that has not been brought forth yet.

Mr. Zimmer asked if there was an interest by any of the members to consult over the next month before the February meeting. Mr. Laging and Ms. Todd were selected to serve in this capacity.

Mr. Krout stated that one of the immediate things that the designers need to do is design the piers of the deck. He stated that one of the main features of the bridges is the shape of the piers, and he asked if there has been any consensus on that. Mr. Sullivan stated that there has been discussion, but not consensus. He continued that there was some discussion on the shape, other than the canted shape. More discussion took place on being able to walk through the pier. Mr. Krout stated that he feels the Planning Department has an obligation to push this forward and not delay this project.

Mr. Searcy stated that from the Capitol Environs Commission's perspective, the Commission would expect nothing less than to put forward the concept for consideration of having the bridges represent the capitol and asked if there is a way to do that. Mr. Sullivan stated that he is not comfortable with putting capitol lights on these bridges. He continued by stating that he does not want to give the impression that these bridges have been here for a hundred years. He stated that maybe we are talking about materials, colors, simple forms and geometry. Mr. Zimmer stated that he viewed the capitol lights as a potential opportunity because he feels they are a clean, traditional light and a better light than most that we see. He also noted that he is interested in seeing what Mr. Sullivan brings forward.

Mr. Krout suggested that having an artist on staff early on is a good idea in these large scale, urban design projects, because they offer a unique perspective. He stated that in his experience, there has been good collaboration with artists.

Mr. Zimmer stated that he feels that an artistic opportunity these bridges may offer is the underpass, where the park space is below the street.

Mr. Searcy stated that Mr. Zimmer, Mr. Laging and Ms. Todd will continue discussions regarding this issue. He thanked Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Krout for their input.

Approval of meeting notes of December 12, 2002

There being a quorum present, Mr. Searcy called for a vote for the approval of the meeting notes of the December 12, 2002 meeting. Those members present were in unanimous agreement to approve the meeting notes as written.

Annual Report of Commission

Mr. Searcy then called for a vote for the approval of the 2002 Annual Report of Commission. Those members present were in unanimous agreement to approve the report as distributed.

Staff Report and Miscellaneous

Mr. Zimmer stated the he needs to proceed with some of the design standard language for the new territory east of Capitol Parkway and asked if there were members interested in working with him on that. Mr. Searcy stated that he would be willing to do so.

There being no further business, Mr. Searcy adjourned the meeting at 8:49 a.m.